



**SB 632 – Maryland Health Benefit Exchange – Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance
Subsidies Program – Workgroup
Committee: Health and Government Operations
Position: Support
March 31, 2022**

On behalf of the Association of Community Services (ACS), which represents over 150 member organizations and community advocates in Howard County, I to urge you to support SB 632 as amended. We appreciate legislators seeing the need for a Small Business and Nonprofit Health Insurance Subsidies Program and taking the time to form a workgroup to determine the best approaches for it to be successful.

As a local nonprofit association, we frequently hear from our members about the challenges of recruiting and retaining employees, and one of the top reasons for that is the inability to afford and offer health insurance for employees. ACS also faces this challenge as well as a small organization. Nonprofits are hampered in our ability to afford health insurance due to a variety of reasons, such as prohibitions on creating health insurance co-ops, having very limited opportunities for grants that will sustainably fund operating expenses, and presumptions that employees can just get health insurances elsewhere (e.g., through a spouse, from a family plan if under age 26) or will go without it. We cannot keep operating like this –particularly as society continues to change and The Great Resignation further drives people to seek better wages and benefits elsewhere.

It is our hope that the workgroup will work to ensure that the subsidies work well for nonprofits and for-profit businesses, the program is funded according to the need, and there is a focus on long-term sustainability for the program. Our employees deserve health insurance for the vital work they do, and nonprofits need support to do that -especially in Howard County where it takes approximately \$75,000 per year for families to be self-sufficient and financially stable¹. With that, please support SB 632 as amended.

Thank you,

Joan Driessen

Joan Driessen
Executive Director

¹ See ACS Self-Sufficiency Indicators Report: <https://www.acshoco.org/self-sufficiency-indicators/>